THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY

FEBRUARY 1913

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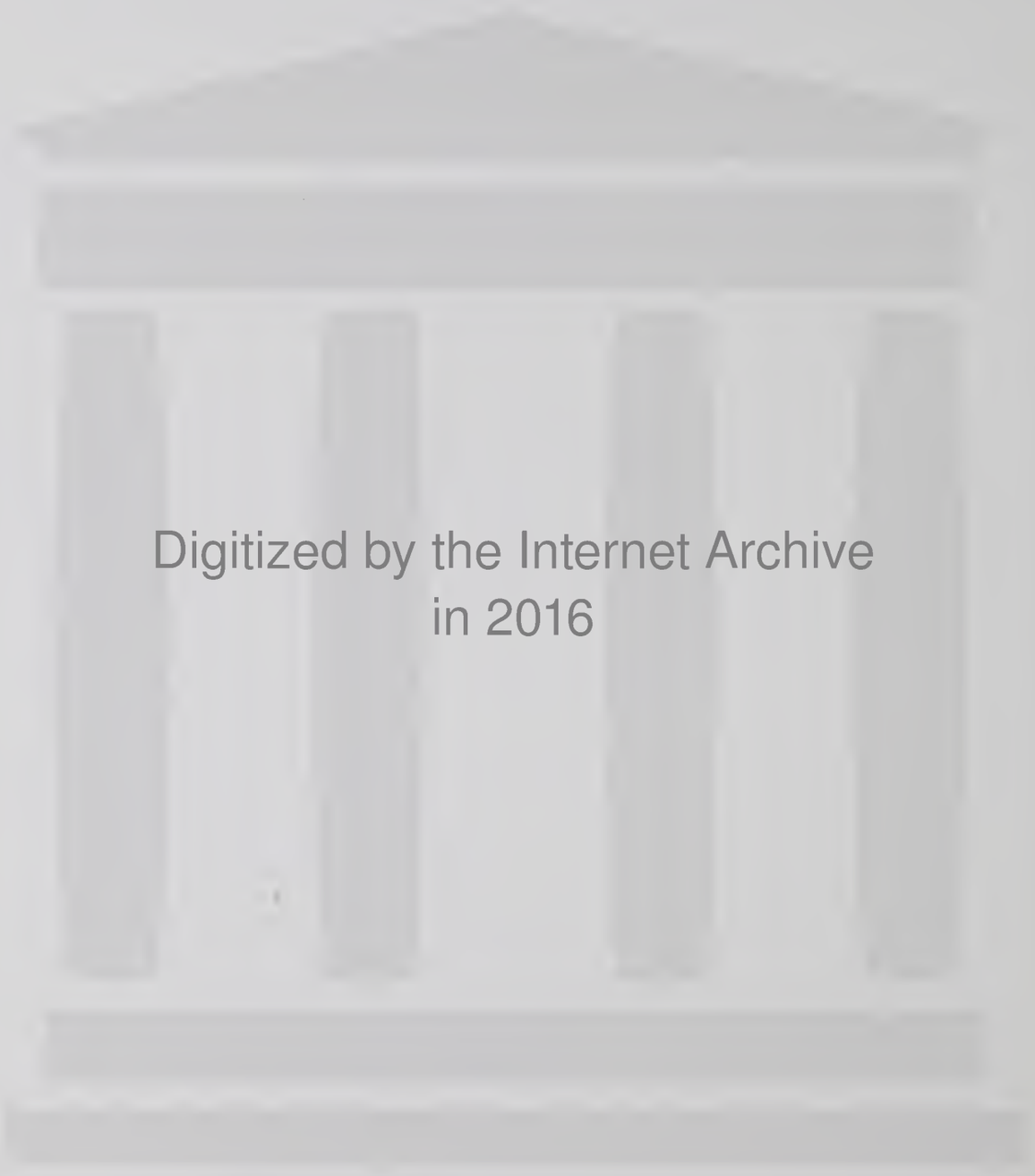

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THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY

FEBRUARY, 1913

THE UNITED STATES *VERSUS* PRINGLE

THE RECORD OF A QUAKER CONSCIENCE

On July 13, 1863, Cyrus Guernsey Pringle, in company with two fellow Quakers of Charlotte, Vermont, was drafted for service in the Union Army. Through religious scruples, the conscripts refused under any considerations to bear arms, and although, in the case of Pringle, a well-to-do uncle offered to pay the price of a substitute, the Quaker's ardent conscience would not permit him to tempt another to commit in his place the sin which he believed to be against the Word of God. Mr. Pringle died not long ago, and his diary, interesting alike as a study of character and as the record of an extraordinary experience, may now be given to the public. — THE EDITORS.

AT Burlington, Vt., on the 13th of the seventh month, 1863, I was drafted. Pleasant are my recollections of the 14th. Much of that rainy day I spent in my chamber, as yet unaware of my fate; in writing and reading and in reflecting to compose my mind for any event. The day and the exercise, by the blessing of the Father, brought me precious reconciliation to the will of Providence.

With ardent zeal for our Faith and the cause of our peaceable principles; and almost disgusted at the lukewarmness and unfaithfulness of very many who profess these; and considering how heavily slight crosses bore upon their shoulders, I felt to say, 'Here am I Father for thy service. As thou will.' May I trust it was He who called me and sent me forth with the consolation: 'My grace is sufficient for thee.' Deeply have I felt many times since that I am nothing without the companionship of the Spirit.

I was to report on the 27th. Then, loyal to our country, W. L. D. and I appeared before the Provost Marshal with a statement of our cases. We were ordered for a hearing on the 29th. On the afternoon of that day W. L. D. was rejected upon examination of the Surgeon, but my case not coming up, he remained with me, — much to my strength and comfort. Sweet was his converse and long to be remembered, as we lay together that warm summer night on the straw of the barracks. By his encouragement much was my mind strengthened; my desires for a pure life, and my resolutions for good. In him and those of whom he spoke I saw the abstract beauty of Quakerism. On the next morning came I. M. D. to support me and plead my case before the Board of Enrollment. On the day after, the 31st, I came before the Board. Respectfully those men listened to the exposition of our principles; and, on our representing that we looked for some relief from the President, the marshal released me for twenty days. Meanwhile appeared L. M. M. and was likewise, by the kindness of

the marshal, though they had received instructions from the Provost Marshal General to show such claims no partiality, released to appear on the 20th day of the eighth month.

All these days we were urged by our acquaintances to pay our commutation money; by some through well-meant kindness and sympathy; by others through interest in the war; and by others still through a belief they entertained it was our duty. But we confess a higher duty than that to country; and, asking no military protection of our Government and grateful for none, deny any obligation to support so unlawful a system, as we hold a war to be even when waged in opposition to an evil and oppressive power and ostensibly in defense of liberty, virtue, and free institutions; and, though touched by the kind interest of friends, we could not relieve their distress by a means we held even more sinful than that of serving ourselves, as by supplying money to hire a substitute we would not only be responsible for the result, but be the agents in bringing others into evil. So looking to our Father alone for help, and remembering that 'Whoso loseth his life for my sake shall find it; but whoso saveth it shall lose it,' we presented ourselves again before the Board, as we had promised to do when released. Being offered four days more of time, we accepted it as affording opportunity to visit our friends; and moreover as there would be more probability of meeting P. D. at Rutland.

Sweet was the comfort and sympathy of our friends as we visited them. There was a deep comfort, as we left them, in the thought that so many pure and pious people follow us with their love and prayers. Appearing finally before the marshal on the 24th, suits and uniforms were selected for us, and we were called upon to give receipts for them. L. M. M. was on his guard, and, being first called upon, declared he could not do so, as that would imply acceptance. Failing to come to any agreement, the matter was postponed till next morning, when we certified to the fact that the articles were 'with us.' Here I must make record of the kindness of the marshal, Rolla Gleason, who treated us with respect and kindness. He had spoken with respect of our Society; had given me furloughs to the amount of twenty-four days, when the marshal at Rutland considered himself restricted by his oath and duty to six days; and here appeared in person to prevent any harsh treatment of us by his sergeants; and though much against his inclinations, assisted in putting on the uniform with his own hands. We bade him Farewell with grateful feelings and expressions of fear that we should not fall into as tender hands again; and amid the rain in the early morning, as the town clock tolled the hour of seven, we were driven amongst the flock that was going forth to the slaughter, down the street and into the cars for Brattleboro. Dark was the day with murk and cloud and rain; and, as we rolled down through the narrow vales of eastern Vermont, somewhat of the shadow crept into our hearts and filled them with dark apprehensions of evil fortune ahead; of long, hopeless trials: of abuse from inferior officers; of contempt from common soldiers; of patient endurance (or an attempt at this), unto an end seen only by the eye of a strong faith.

Herded into a car by ourselves, we conscripts, substitutes, and the rest, through the greater part of the day, swept over the fertile meadows along the banks of the White River and the Connecticut, through pleasant scenes that had little of delight for us. At Woodstock we were joined by the conscripts from the 1st District, — alto-

gether an inferior company from those before with us, who were honest yeomen from the northern and mountainous towns, while these were many of them substitutes from the cities.

At Brattleboro we were marched up to the camp; our knapsacks and persons searched; and any articles of citizen's dress taken from us; and then shut up in a rough board building under a guard. Here the prospect was dreary, and I felt some lack of confidence in our Father's arm, though but two days before I wrote to my dear friend, E. M. H., —

> I go to-morrow where the din
> Of war is in the sulphurous air.
> I go the Prince of Peace to serve,
> His cross of suffering to bear.

Brattleboro, 26*th*, 8*th* month, 1863. — Twenty-five or thirty caged lions roam lazily to and fro through this building hour after hour through the day. On every side without, sentries pace their slow beat, bearing loaded muskets. Men are ranging through the grounds or hanging in synods about the doors of the different buildings, apparently without a purpose. Aimless is military life, except betimes its aim is deadly. Idle life blends with violent death-struggles till the man is unmade a man; and henceforth there is little of manhood about him. Of a man he is made a Soldier, which is a man-destroying machine in two senses, — a thing for the prosecuting or repelling an invasion like the block of stone in the fortress or the plate of iron on the side of the Monitor. They are alike. I have tried in vain to define a difference, and I see only this. The iron-clad with its gun is the bigger soldier: the more formidable in attack, the less liable to destruction in a given time; the block the most capable of resistance; both are equally obedient to officers. Or the more perfect is the soldier, the more nearly he approaches these in this respect.

Three times a day we are marched out to the mess houses for our rations. In our hands we carry a tin plate, whereon we bring back a piece of bread (sour and tough most likely), and a cup. Morning and noon a piece of meat, antique betimes, bears company with the bread. They who wish it receive in their cups two sorts of decoctions: in the morning burnt bread, or peas perhaps, steeped in water with some saccharine substance added (I dare not affirm it to be sugar). At night steeped tea extended by some other herbs probably and its pungency and acridity assuaged by the saccharine principle aforementioned. On this we have so far subsisted and, save some nauseating, comfortably. As we go out and return, on right and left and in front and rear go bayonets. Some substitutes heretofore have escaped and we are not to be neglected in our attendants. Hard beds are healthy, but I query cannot the result be defeated by the *degree?* Our mattresses are boards. Only the slight elasticity of our thin blankets breaks the fall of our flesh and bones thereon. Oh! now I praise the discipline I have received from uncarpeted floors through warm summer nights of my boyhood.

The building resounds with petty talk; jokes and laughter and swearing. Something more than that. Many of the caged lions are engaged with cards, and money changes hands freely. Some of the caged lions read, and some sleep, and so the weary day goes by.

L. M. M. and I addressed the following letter to Governor Holbrook and hired a corporal to forward it to him.

Brattleboro, Vt., 26*th*, 8*th* month, 1863.

Frederick Holbrook,

Governor of Vermont: —

We, the undersigned members of

the Society of Friends, beg leave to represent to thee, that we were lately drafted in the 3d Dist. of Vermont, have been forced into the army and reached the camp near this town yesterday.

That in the language of the elders of our New York Yearly Meeting, 'We love our country and acknowledge with gratitude to our Heavenly Father the many blessings we have been favored with under the government; and can feel no sympathy with any who seek its overthrow.'

But that, true to well-known principles of our society, we cannot violate our religious convictions either by complying with military requisitions or by the equivalents of this compliance, — the furnishing of a substitute or payment of commutation money. That, therefore, we are brought into suffering and exposed to insult and contempt from those who have us in charge, as well as to the penalties of insubordination, though liberty of conscience is *denied* us by the Constitution of Vermont as well as that of the United States.

Therefore, we beg of thee as Governor of our State any assistance thou may be able to render, should it be no more than the influence of thy position interceding in our behalf.

Truly Thy Friend,

CYRUS G. PRINGLE.

P. S. — We are informed we are to be sent to the vicinity of Boston tomorrow.'

27th. — On board train to Boston. The long afternoon of yesterday passed slowly away. This morning passed by, — the time of our stay in Brattleboro, and we neither saw nor heard anything of our Governor. We suppose he could not or would not help us. So as we go down to our trial we have no arm to lean upon among all men; but why dost thou complain, oh, my Soul? Seek thou that faith that will prove a buckler to thy breast, and gain for thee the protection of an arm mightier than the arms of all men.

28th. CAMP VERMONT: LONG ISLAND, BOSTON HARBOR. — In the early morning damp and cool we marched down off the heights of Brattleboro to take train for this place. Once in the car the dashing young cavalry officer, who had us in charge, gave notice he had placed men through the cars, with loaded revolvers, who had orders to shoot any person attempting to escape, or jump from the window, and that any one would be shot if he even put his head out of the window. Down the beautiful valley of the Connecticut, all through its broad intervales, heavy with its crops of corn or tobacco, or shaven smooth by the summer harvest; over the hard and stony counties of northern Massachusetts, through its suburbs and under the shadow of Bunker Hill Monument we come into the City of Boston, 'the Hub of the Universe.' Out through street after street we were marched double guarded to the wharves, where we took a small steamer for the island some six miles out in the harbor. A circumstance connected with this march is worth mentioning for its singularity: at the head of this company, like convicts (and feeling very much like such), through the City of Boston walked, with heavy hearts and down-cast eyes, two Quakers.

Here on this dry and pleasant island in the midst of the beautiful Massachusetts Bay, we have the liberty of the camp, the privilege of air and sunshine and hay beds to sleep upon. So we went to bed last night with somewhat of gladness elevating our depressed spirits.

Here are many troops gathering

daily from all the New England States except Connecticut and Rhode Island. Their white tents are dotting the green slopes and hill-tops of the island and spreading wider and wider. This is the flow of military tide here just now. The ebb went out to sea in the shape of a great shipload just as we came in, and another load will be sent before many days. All is war here. We are surrounded by the pomp and circumstance of war, and enveloped in the cloud thereof. The cloud settles down over the minds and souls of all; they cannot see beyond, nor do they try; but with the clearer eye of Christian faith I try to look beyond all this error unto Truth and Holiness immaculate: and thanks to our Father, I am favored with glimpses that are sweet consolation amid this darkness.

This is one gratification: the men with us give us their sympathy. They seem to look upon us tenderly and pitifully, and their expressions of kind wishes are warm. Although we are relieved from duty and from drill, and may lie in our tents during rain and at night, we have heard of no complaint. This is the more worthy of note as there are so few in our little (Vermont) camp. Each man comes on guard half the days. It would probably be otherwise were their hearts in the service; but I have yet to find the man in any of these camps or at any service who does not wish himself at home. Substitutes say if they knew all they know now before leaving home they would not have enlisted; and they have been but a week from their homes and have endured no hardships. Yesterday L. M. M. and I appeared before the Captain commanding this camp with a statement of our cases. He listened to us respectfully and promised to refer us to the General commanding here, General Devens; and in the mean time released us from duty. In a short time afterward he passed us in our tent, asking our names. We have not heard from him, but do not drill or stand guard; so, we suppose, his release was confirmed. At that interview a young lieutenant sneeringly told us he thought we had better throw away our scruples and fight in the service of the country; and as we told the Captain we could neither accept pay, he laughed mockingly, and said he would not stay here for $13.00 per month. He gets more than a hundred, I suppose.

How beautiful seems the world on this glorious morning here by the seaside! Eastward and toward the sun, fair green isles with outlines of pure beauty are scattered over the blue bay. Along the far line of the mainland white hamlets and towns glisten in the morning sun; countless tiny waves dance in the wind that comes off shore and sparkle sunward like myriads of gems. Up the fair vault, flecked by scarcely a cloud, rolls the sun in glory. Though fair be the earth, it has come to be tainted and marred by him who was meant to be its crowning glory. Behind me on this island are crowded vile and wicked men, the murmur of whose ribaldry riseth continually like the smoke and fumes of a lower world. Oh! Father of Mercies, forgive the hard heartlessness and blindness and scarlet sins of my fellows, my brothers.

PRISON EXPERIENCES FOR CONSCIENCE' SAKE — OUR PRISON

31*st.*, 8*th* month, 1863. In Guard House. — Yesterday morning L. M. M. and I were called upon to do fatigue duty. The day before we were asked to do some cleaning about camp and to bring water. We wished to be obliging, to appear willing to bear a hand toward that which would promote our own and our fellows' health and convenience; but as we worked we did not feel easy. Suspecting we had beeen assigned to

such work, the more we discussed in our minds the subject, the more clearly the right way seemed opened to us; and we separately came to the judgment that we must not conform to this requirement. So when the sergeant bade us 'Police the streets,' we asked him if he had received instructions with regard to us, and he replied we had been assigned to 'Fatigue Duty.' L. M. M. answered him that we could not obey. He left us immediately for the Major (Jarvis of Weathersfield, Vt.). He came back and ordered us to the Major's tent. The latter met us outside and inquired concerning the complaint he had heard of us. Upon our statement of our position, he apparently undertook to argue our whimsies, as he probably looked upon our principles, out of our heads. We replied to his points as we had ability; but he soon turned to bullying us rather than arguing with us, and would hardly let us proceed with a whole sentence. 'I make some pretension to religion myself,' he said; and quoted the Old Testament freely in support of war. Our terms were, submission or the guard-house. We replied we could not obey.

This island was formerly occupied by a company, who carried on the large farm it comprises and opened a great hotel as a summer resort.

The subjects of all misdemeanors, grave and small, are here confined. Those who have deserted or attempted it; those who have insulted officers and those guilty of theft, fighting, drunkenness, etc. In *most*, as in the camps, there are traces yet of manhood and of the Divine Spark, but some are abandoned, dissolute. There are many here among the substitutes who were actors in the late New York riots. They show unmistakably the characteristics and sentiments of those rioters, and, especially, hatred to the blacks drafted and about camp, and exhibit this in foul and profane jeers heaped upon these unoffending men at every opportunity. In justice to the blacks I must say they are superior to the whites in all their behavior.

31*st.* P. M. — Several of us were a little time ago called out one by one to answer inquiries with regard to our offenses. We replied we could not comply with military requisitions. P. D., being last, was asked if he would die first, and replied promptly but mildly, *Yes.*

Here we are in prison in our own land for no crimes, no offense to God nor man; nay, more: we are here for obeying the commands of the Son of God and the influences of his Holy Spirit. I must look for patience in this dark day. I am troubled too much and excited and perplexed.

1*st.*, 9*th* month. — Oh, the horrors of the past night — I never before experienced such *sensations* and fears; and never did I feel so clearly that I had nothing but the hand of our Father to shield me from evil. Last night we three lay down together on the floor of a lower room of which we had taken possession. The others were above. We had but one blanket between us and the floor, and one over us. The other one we had lent to a wretched deserter who had skulked into our room for *relief*, being without anything of his own. We had during the day gained the respect of the fellows, and they seemed disposed to let us occupy our room in peace. I cannot say in quiet, for these caged beasts are restless, and the resonant boards of this old building speak of bedlam. The thin board partitions, the light door fastened only by a pine stick thrust into a wooden loop on the casing, seemed small protection in case of assault; but we lay down to sleep in quiet trust. But we had scarcely fallen

asleep before we were awakened by the demoniac howlings and yelling of a man just brought into the next room, and allowed the liberty of the whole house. He was drunk, and further seemed to be laboring under delirium tremens. He crashed about furiously, and all the more after the guard tramped heavily in and bound him with handcuffs, and chain and ball. Again and again they left, only to return to quiet him by threats or by crushing him down to the floor and gagging him. In a couple of hours he became quiet and we got considerable sleep.

In the morning the fellow came into our room apologizing for the intrusion. He appeared a smart, fine-looking young man, restless and uneasy. P. D. has a way of disposing of intruders that is quite effectual. I have not entirely disposed of some misgivings with respect to the legitimacy of his use of the means, so he commenced reading aloud in the Bible. The fellow was impatient and noisy, but he soon settled down on the floor beside him. As he listened and talked with us the recollections of his father's house and his innocent childhood were awakened. He was the child of pious parents, taught in Sabbath School and under pure home influences till thirteen. Then he was drawn into bad company, soon after leaving home for the sea; and, since then, has served in the army and navy, — in the army in Wilson's and Hawkins's [brigades]. His was the old story of the total subjection of moral power and thralldom to evil habits and associates. He would get drunk, whenever it was in his power. It was wrong; but he could not help it. Though he was awakened and recollected his parents looking long and in vain for his return, he soon returned to camp, to his wallowing in the mire, and I fear to his path to certain perdition.

3*d*. [9th month.] — A Massachusetts major, the officer of the day, in his inspection of the guard-house came into our room to-day. We were lying on the floor engaged in reading and writing. He was apparently surprised at this and inquired the name of our books; and finding the Bible and Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, observed that they were good books. I cannot say if he knew we were Friends, but he asked us why we were in here.

Like all officers he proceeded to reason with us, and to advise us to serve, presenting no comfort if we still persisted in our course. He informed us of a young Friend, Edward W. Holway of Sandwich, Mass., having been yesterday under punishment in the camp by his orders, who was to-day doing service about camp. He said he was not going to put his Quaker in the guard-house, but was going to bring him to work by punishment. We were filled with deep sympathy for him and desired to cheer him by kind words as well as by the knowledge of our similar situation. We obtained permission of the Major to write to him a letter open to his inspection. 'You may be sure,' said E. W. H. to us at W., 'the Major did not allow it to leave his hands.'

This forenoon the Lieutenant of the Day came in and acted the same part, though he was not so cool, and left expressing the hope, if we would not serve our country like men, that God would curse us. Oh, the trials from these officers! One after another comes in to relieve himself upon us. Finding us firm and not lacking in words, they usually fly into a passion and end by bullying us. How can we reason with such men? They are utterly unable to comprehend the pure Christianity and spirituality of our principles. They have long stiffened their necks in their own strength. They

have stopped their ears to the voice of the Spirit, and hardened their hearts to his influences. They see no duty higher than that to country. What shall we receive at their hands?

This Major tells us we will not be tried here. Then we are to be sent into the field, and there who will deliver us but God? Ah, I have nursed in my heart a hope that I may be spared to return home. Must I cast it out and have no desire, but to do the will of my Master. It were better, even so. O, Lord, Thy will be done. Grant I may make it my chief delight and render true submission thereto.

Yesterday a little service was required of our dear L. M. M., but he insisted he could not comply. A sergeant and two privates were engaged. They coaxed and threatened him by turns, and with a determination not to be baffled took him out to perform it. Though guns were loaded he still stood firm and was soon brought back. We are happy here in guard-house, — too happy, too much at ease. We should see more of the Comforter, — feel more strength, — if the trial were fiercer; but this is well. This is a trial of strength of patience.

6*th*. [9th month.] — Yesterday we had officers again for visitors. Major J. B. Gould, 13th Massachusetts, came in with the determination of persuading us to consent to be transferred to the hospital here, he being the Provost Marshal of the island and having the power to make the transfer. He is different in being and bearing from those who have been here before. His motives were apparently those of pure kindness, and his demeanor was that of a gentleman. Though he talked with us more than an hour, he lost no part of his self-control or good humor. So by his eloquence and kindness he made more impression upon us than any before. As Congregationalist he well knew the courts of the temple, but the Holy of Holies he had never seen, and knew nothing of its secrets. He understood expediency; but is not the man to 'lay down his life for my sake.' He is sincere and seems to think what Major Gould believes cannot be far from right. After his attempt we remained as firm as ever. We must expect all means will be tried upon us, and no less persuasion than threats.

At the Hospital, 7*th*. [9th month.] — Yesterday morning came to us Major Gould again, informing us that he had come to take us out of that dirty place, as he could not see such respectable men lying there, and was going to take us up to the hospital. We assured him we could not serve there, and asked him if he would not bring us back when we had there declared our purpose. He would not reply directly; but brought us here and left us. When the surgeon knew our determination, he was for haling us back at once; what he wanted, he said, was willing men. We sat on the sward without the hospital tents till nearly noon, for some one to take us back; when we were ordered to move into the tents and quarters assigned us in the mess-room. The Major must have interposed, demonstrating his kindness by his resolution that we should occupy and enjoy the pleasanter quarters of the hospital, certainly if serving; but none the less so if we declined. Later in the day L. M. M. and P. D. were sitting without, when he passed them and, laughing heartily, declared they were the strangest prisoners of war he ever saw. He stopped some time to talk with them and when they came in they declared him a kind and honest man.

If we interpret aright his conduct, this dangerous trial is over, and we

have escaped the perplexities that his kindness and determination threw about us.

13*th.* — Last night we received a letter from Henry Dickinson, stating that the President, though sympathizing with those in our situation, felt bound by the Conscription Act, and felt liberty, in view of his oath to execute the laws, to do no more than detail us from active service to hospital duty, or to the charge of the colored refugees. For more than a week have we lain here, refusing to engage in hospital service; shall we retrace the steps of the past week? Or shall we go South as overseers of the blacks on the confiscated estates of the rebels, to act under military commanders and to report to such? What would become of our testimony and our determination to preserve ourselves clear of the guilt of this war?

P.S. We have written back to Henry Dickinson that we cannot purchase life at cost of peace of soul.

14*th.* — We have been exceeding sorrowful since receiving advice — as we must call it — from H. D. to enter the hospital service or some similar situation. We did not look for that from him. It is not what our Friends sent us out for; nor is it what we came for. We shall feel desolate and dreary in our position, unless supported and cheered by the words of those who have at heart our best interests more than regard for our personal welfare. We walk as we feel guided by Best Wisdom. Oh, may we run and not err in the high path of Holiness.

16*th.* — Yesterday a son-in-law of N. B. of Lynn came to see us. He was going to get passes for one or two of the Lynn Friends, that they might come over to see us to-day. He informed us that the sentiment of the Friends hereabouts was that we might enter the hospital without compromising our principles; and he produced a letter from W. W. to S. B. to the same effect. W. W. expressed his opinion that we might do so without doing it in lieu of other service. How can we evade a fact? Does not the government both demand and accept it as in lieu of other service. Oh, the cruelest blow of all comes from our friends.

17*th.* — Although this trial was brought upon us by our friends, their intentions were well meant. Their regard for our personal welfare and safety too much absorbs the zeal they should possess for the maintenance of the principle of the peaceableness of our Master's kingdom. An unfaithfulness to this through meekness and timidity seems manifest, — too great a desire to avoid suffering at some sacrifice of principle, perhaps, — too little of placing of Faith and confidence upon the Rock of Eternal Truth.

Our friends at home, with W. D. at their head, support us; and yesterday, at the opportune moment, just as we were most distressed by the solicitations of our visitors, kind and cheering words of Truth were sent us through dear C. M. P., whose love rushes out to us warm and living and just from an overflowing fountain.

I must record another work of kind attention shown us by Major Gould. Before we embarked, he came to us for a friendly visit. As we passed him on our way to the wharf he bade us Farewell and expressed a hope we should not have so hard a time as we feared. And after we were aboard the steamer, as the result of his interference on our behalf, we must believe, we were singled out from the midst of the prisoners, among whom we had been placed previous to coming aboard, and allowed

the liberty of the vessel. By this are we saved much suffering, as the other prisoners were kept under close guard in a corner on the outside of the boat.

Forest City up the Potomac. *22nd.* [9th month.] — It was near noon, yesterday, when we turned in from sea between Cape Charles and Henry; and, running thence down across the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, alongside Old Point Comfort, dropped anchor off Fortress Monroe. The scene around us was one of beauty, though many of its adornments were the results and means of wrong. The sunshine was brighter, the verdure greener to our eyes weary of the sea, and the calm was milder and more grateful that we had so long tossed in the storm.

The anchor was soon drawn up again and the Forest City steamed up the James River toward Newport News, and turning to the left between the low, pine-grown banks, passed Norfolk to leave the New Hampshire detachment at Portsmouth.

Coming back to Fortress Monroe, some freight was landed; and in the calm clear light of the moon, we swung away from shore and dropping down the mouth of the river, rounded Old Point, and, going up the Chesapeake, entered the Potomac in the night-time.

Off Shore, Alexandria. *23d.* — Here we anchored last night after the main detachment was landed, and the Vermont and Masschusetts men remained on board another night. We hear we are to go right to the field, where active operations are going on. This seems hard. We have not till now given up the hope that we were not to go out into Virginia with the rest of the men, but were to be kept here at Washington. Fierce, indeed, are our trials. I am not discouraged entirely; but I am weak from want of food which I can eat, and from sickness. I do not know how I am going to live in such way, or get to the front.

P.S. We have just landed; and I had the liberty to buy a pie of a woman hawking such things, that has strengthened me wonderfully.

Camp near Culpeper. *25th.* — My distress is too great for words; but I must overcome my disinclination to write, or this record will remain unfinished. So, with aching head and heart, I proceed.

Yesterday morning we were roused early for breakfast and for preparation for starting. After marching out of the barracks, we were first taken to the armory, where each man received a gun and its equipments and a piece of tent. We stood in line, waiting for our turn with apprehensions of coming trouble. Though we had felt free to keep with those among whom we had been placed, we could not consent to carry a gun, even though we did not intend to use it; and, from our previous experience, we knew it would go harder with us, if we took the first step in the wrong direction, though it might seem an unimportant one, and an easy and not very wrong way to avoid difficulty. So we felt decided we must decline receiving the guns. In the hurry and bustle of equipping a detachment of soldiers, one attempting to explain a position and the grounds therefor so peculiar as ours to junior, petty officers, possessing liberally the characteristics of these: pride, vanity, conceit, and an arbitrary spirit, impatience, profanity, and contempt for holy things, must needs find the opportunity a very favorable one.

We succeeded in giving these young officers a slight idea of what we were; and endeavored to answer their questions of why we did not pay our com-

mutation, and avail ourselves of that provision made expressly for such; of why we had come as far as that place, etc. We realized then the unpleasant results of that practice, that had been employed with us by the successive officers into whose hands we had fallen, — of shirking any responsibility, and of passing us on to the next officer above.

A council was soon holden to decide what to do with us. One proposed to place us under arrest, a sentiment we rather hoped might prevail, as it might prevent our being sent on to the front; but another, in some spite and impatience, insisted, as it was their duty to supply a gun to every man and forward him, that the guns should be put upon us, and we be made to carry them. Accordingly the equipment was buckled about us, and the straps of the guns being loosened, they were thrust over our heads and hung upon our shoulders. In this way we were urged forward through the streets of Alexandria; and, having been put upon a long train of dirt cars, were started for Culpeper. We came over a long stretch of desolated and deserted country, through battlefields of previous summers, and through many camps now lively with the work of this present campaign. Seeing, for the first time, a country made dreary by the war-blight, a country once adorned with graves and green pastures and meadows and fields of waving grain, and happy with a thousand homes, now laid with the ground, one realizes as he can in no other way something of the ruin that lies in the trail of a war. But upon these fields of Virginia, once so fair, there rests a two-fold blight, first that of slavery, now that of war. When one contrasts the face of this country with the smiling hillsides and vales of New England, he sees stamped upon it in characters so marked, none but a blind man can fail to read, the great irrefutable arguments against slavery and against war, too; and must be filled with loathing for these twin relics of barbarism, so awful in the potency of their consequences that they can change even the face of the country.

Through the heat of this long ride, we felt our total lack of water and the meagreness of our supply of food. Our thirst became so oppressive as we were marched here from Culpeper, some four miles with scarcely a halt to rest, under our heavy loads, and through the heat and deep dust of the road, that we drank water and dipped in the brooks we passed, though it was discolored with the soap the soldiers had used in washing. The guns interfered with our walking, and, slipping down, dragged with painful weight upon our shoulders. Poor P. D. fell out from exhaustion and did not come in till we had been some little time at the camp. We were taken to the 4th Vermont regiment and soon apportioned to companies. Though we waited upon the officer commanding the company in which we were placed, and endeavored to explain our situation, we were required immediately after to be present at inspection of arms. We declined, but an attempt was made to force us to obedience, first, by the officers of the company, then, by those of the regiment; but, failing to exact obedience of us, we were ordered by the colonel to be tied, and, if we made outcry, to be gagged also, and to be kept so till he gave orders for our release. After two or three hours we were relieved and left under guard; lying down on the ground in the open air, and covering ourselves with our blankets, we soon fell asleep from exhaustion, and the fatigue of the day.

This morning the officers told us we must yield. We must obey and serve. We were threatened great severities

and even death. We seem perfectly at the mercy of the military power, and, more, in the hands of the inferior officers, who, from their being far removed from Washington, feel less restraint from those Regulations of the Army, which are for the protection of privates from personal abuse.

26th. [*9th* month.] — Yesterday my mind was much agitated: doubts and fears and forebodings seized me. I was alone, seeking a resting-place and finding none. It seemed as if God had forsaken me in this dark hour; and the Tempter whispered, that after all I might be only the victim of a delusion. My prayers for faith and strength seemed all in vain.

But this morning I enjoy peace, and feel as though I could face anything. Though I am as a lamb in the shambles, yet do I cry, 'Thy will be done,' and can indeed say, —

> Passive to His holy will
> Trust I in my Master still
> Even though he slay me.

I mind me of the anxiety of our dear friends about home, and of their prayers for us.

Oh, praise be to the Lord for the peace and love and resignation that has filled my soul to-day! Oh, the passing beauty of holiness! There is a holy life that is above fear; it is a close communion with Christ. I pray for this continually but am not free from the shadow and the tempter. There is ever present with us the thought that perhaps we shall serve the Lord the most effectually by our death, and desire, if that be the service He requires of us, that we may be ready and resigned.

Regimental Hospital, 4th Vermont. *29th.* [*9th* month.] — On the evening of the 26th the Colonel came to us apologizing for the roughness with which he treated us at first, which was, as he insisted, through ignorance of our real character and position. He told us if we persisted in our course, death would probably follow; though at another time he confessed to P. D. that this would only be the extreme sentence of court-martial.

He urged us to go into the hospital, stating that this course was advised by Friends about New York. We were too well aware of such a fact to make any denial, though it was a subject of surprise to us that he should be informed of it. He pleaded with us long and earnestly, urging us with many promises of indulgence and favor and attentions we found afterwards to be untrue. He gave us till the next morning to consider the question and report our decision. In our discussion of the subject among ourselves, we were very much perplexed. If all his statements concerning the ground taken by our Society were true, we seemed to be liable, if we persisted in the course which alone seemed to us to be in accordance with Truth, to be exposed to the charge of over-zeal and fanaticism even among our own brethren. Regarding the work to be done in hospital as one of mercy and benevolence, we asked if we had any right to refuse its performance; and questioned whether we could do more good by endeavoring to bear to the end a clear testimony against war, than by laboring by word and deed among the needy in the hospitals and camps. We saw around us a rich field for usefulness in which there were scarce any laborers, and toward whose work our hands had often started involuntarily and unbidden. At last we consented to a trial, at least till we could make inquiries concerning the Colonel's allegations, and ask the counsel of our friends, reserving the privilege of returning to our former position.

At first a great load seemed rolled away from us; we rejoiced in the prospect of life again. But soon there prevailed a feeling of condemnation, as though we had sold our Master. And that first day was one of the bitterest I ever experienced. It was a time of stern conflict of soul. The voice that seemed to say, 'Follow me,' as I sought guidance the night before, kept pleading with me, convincing of sin, till I knew of a truth my feet had strayed from His path. The Scriptures, which the day before I could scarcely open without finding words of strength and comfort, seemed closed against me, till after a severe struggle alone in the wood to which I had retired, I consented to give up and retrace my steps in faith. But it was too late. L. M. M. wishing to make a fair, honest trial, we were brought here — P. D. being already here unwell. We feel we are erring; but scarce anything is required of us and we wait to hear from Friends.

Of these days of going down into sin, I wish to make little mention. I would that my record of such degradation be brief. We wish to come to an understanding with our friends and the Society before we move; but it does not seem that we can repress the upheavings of Truth in our hearts. We are bruised by sin.

It is with pleasure I record we have just waited upon the Colonel with an explanation of our distress of mind, requesting him to proceed with court-martial. We were kindly and tenderly received. 'If you want a trial I can give it to you,' he answered. The brigade has just marched out to join with the division for inspection. After that we are to have attention to our case.

P.M. There is particular cause for congratulation in the consideration that we took this step this morning, when now we receive a letter from H. D. charging us to faithfulness.

When lately I have seen dear L. M. M. in the thoroughness and patience of his trial to perform service in hospital, his uneasiness and the intensity of his struggle as manifested by his silence and disposition to avoid the company of his friends, and seen him fail and declare to us, 'I cannot stay here,' I have received a new proof, and to me a strong one, because it is from the experimental knowledge of an honest man, that no Friend, who is really such, desiring to keep himself clear of complicity with this system of war and to bear a perfect testimony against it, can lawfully perform service in the hospitals of the Army in lieu of bearing arms.

10*th*. mo., 3*d*. — To-day dawned fair and our Camp is dry again. I was asked to clean the gun I brought, and declining, was tied some two hours upon the ground.

6*th*. At Washington. — At first, after being informed of our declining to serve in his hospital, Colonel Foster did not appear altered in his kind regard for us. But his spleen soon became evident. At the time we asked for a trial by court-martial, and it was his duty to place us under arrest and proceed with the preferring of his charges against us. For a while he seemed to hesitate and consult his inferior officers, and among them his Chaplain. The result of the conference was our being ordered into our companies, that, separated, and with the force of the officers of a company bearing upon us, we might the more likely be subdued. Yet the Colonel assured L. M. M., interceding in my behalf, when the lieutenant commanding my company threatened force upon me, that he should not allow any personal injury. When we marched next day I was compelled to bear a gun and equipments. My associates were more fortunate,

for, being asked if they would carry their guns, declined and saw no more trouble from them. The captain of the company in which P. D. was placed told him he did not believe he was ugly about it, and that he could only put him under arrest and prefer charges against him. He accordingly was taken under guard, where he lay till we left for here.

The next morning the men were busy in burnishing their arms. When I looked toward the one I had borne, yellow with rust, I trembled in the weakness of the flesh at the trial I felt impending over me. Before the Colonel was up I knocked at his tent, but was told he was asleep, though, through the opening, I saw him lying gazing at me. Although I felt I should gain no relief from him, I applied again soon after. He admitted me and, lying on his bed, inquired with cold heartlessness what I wanted. I stated to him, that I could never consent to serve, and, being under the war-power, was resigned to suffer instead all the just penalties of the law. I begged of him release from the attempts by violence to compel my obedience and service, and a trial, though likely to be made by those having no sympathy with me, yet probably in a manner comformable to law.

He replied that he had shown us all the favor he should; that he had, now, turned us over to the military power and was going to let that take its course; that is, henceforth we were to be at the mercy of the inferior officers, without appeal to law, justice, or mercy. He said he had placed us in a pleasant position, against which we could have no reasonable objection, and that we had failed to perform our agreement. He wished to deny that our consent was only temporary and conditional. He declared, furthermore, his belief, that a man who would not fight for his country did not deserve to live. I was glad to withdraw from his presence as soon as I could.

I went back to my tent and laid down for a season of retirement, endeavoring to gain resignation to any event. I dreaded torture and desired strength of flesh and spirit. My trial soon came. The lieutenant called me out, and pointing to the gun that lay near by, asked if I was going to clean it. I replied to him, that I could not comply with military requisitions, and felt resigned to the consequences. 'I do not ask about your feelings; I want to know if you are going to clean that gun.' 'I cannot do it,' was my answer. He went away, saying, 'Very well,' and I crawled into the tent again. Two sergeants soon called for me, and taking me a little aside, bid me lie down on my back, and stretching my limbs apart tied cords to my wrists and ankles and these to four stakes driven in the ground somewhat in the form of an X.

I was very quiet in my mind as I lay there on the ground [soaked] with the rain of the previous day, exposed to the heat of the sun, and suffering keenly from the cords binding my wrists and straining my muscles. And, if I dared the presumption, I should say that I caught a glimpse of heavenly pity. I wept, not so much from my own suffering as from sorrow that such things should be in our own country, where Justice and Freedom and Liberty of Conscience have been the annual boast of Fourth-of-July orators so many years. It seemed that our forefathers in the faith had wrought and suffered in vain, when the privileges they so dearly bought were so soon set aside. And I was sad, that one endeavoring to follow our dear Master should be so generally regarded as a despicable and stubborn culprit.

After something like an hour had passed, the lieutenant came with his

orderly to ask me if I was ready to clean the gun. I replied to the orderly asking the question, that it could but give me pain to be asked or required to do anything I believed wrong. He repeated it to the lieutenant just behind him, who advanced and addressed me. I was favored to improve the opportunity to say to him a few things I wished. He said little; and, when I had finished, he withdrew with the others who had gathered around. About the end of another hour his orderly came and released me.

I arose and sat on the ground. I did not rise to go away. I had not where to go, nothing to do. As I sat there my heart swelled with joy from above. The consolation and sweet fruit of tribulation patiently endured. But I also grieved, that the world was so far gone astray, so cruel and blind. It seemed as if the gospel of Christ had never been preached upon earth, and the beautiful example of his life had been utterly lost sight of.

Some of the men came about me, advising me to yield, and among them one of those who had tied me down, telling me what I had already suffered was nothing to what I must yet suffer unless I yielded; that human flesh could not endure what they would put upon me. I wondered if it could be that they could force me to obedience by torture, and examined myself closely to see if they had advanced as yet one step toward the accomplishment of their purposes. Though weaker in body, I believed I found myself, through divine strength, as firm in my resolution to maintain my allegiance to my Master.

The relaxation of my nerves and muscles after having been so tensely strained left me that afternoon so weak that I could hardly walk or perform any mental exertion.

I had not yet eaten the mean and scanty breakfast I had prepared, when I was ordered to pack up my things and report myself at the lieutenant's tent. I was accustomed to such orders and complied, little moved.

The lieutenant received me politely with, 'Good-morning, Mr. Pringle,' and desiring me to be seated, proceeded with the writing with which he was engaged. I sat down in some wonderment and sought to be quiet and prepared for any event.

'You are ordered to report to Washington,' said he; 'I do not know what it is for.' I assured him that neither did I know. We were gathered before the Major's tent for preparation for departure. The regimental officers were there manifesting surprise and chagrin; for they could not but show both as they looked upon us, whom the day before they were threatening to crush into submission, and attempting also to execute their threats that morning, standing out of their power and under orders from one superior to their Major Commanding E. M. As the bird uncaged, so were our hearts that morning. Short and uncertain at first were the flights of Hope. As the slave many times before us, leaving his yoke behind him, turned from the plantations of Virginia and set his face toward the far North, so we from out a grasp as close and as abundant in suffering and severity, and from without the line of bayonets that had so many weeks surrounded us, turned our backs upon the camp of the 4th Vermont and took our way over the turnpike that ran through the tented fields of Culpeper.

At the War Office we were soon admitted to an audience with the Adjutant General, Colonel Townsend, whom we found to be a very fine man, mild and kind. He referred our cases to the Secretary of War, Stanton, by whom we were ordered to report for service to Surgeon General Hammond. Here we

met Isaac Newton, Commissioner of Agriculture, waiting for our arrival, and James Austin of Nantucket, expecting his son, Charles L. Austin, and Edward W. Holway of Sandwich, Mass., conscripted Friends like ourselves, and ordered here from the 22nd Massachusetts.

We understand it is through the influence of Isaac Newton that Friends have been able to approach the heads of Government in our behalf and to prevail with them to so great an extent. He explained to us the circumstance in which we are placed. That the Secretary of War and President sympathized with Friends in their present suffering, and would grant them full release, but that they felt themselves bound by their oaths that they would execute the laws, to carry out to its full extent the Conscription Act. That there appeared but one door of relief open, — that was to parole us and allow us to go home, but subject to their call again ostensibly, though this they neither wished nor proposed to do. That the fact of Friends in the Army and refusing service had attracted public attention so that it was not expedient to parole us at present. That, therefore, we were to be sent to one of the hospitals for a short time, where it was hoped and expressly requested that we would consent to remain quiet and acquiesce, if possible, in whatever might be required of us. That our work there would be quite free from objection, being for the direct relief of the sick; and that there he would release none for active service in the field, as the nurses were hired civilians.

These requirements being so much less objectionable than we had feared, we felt relief, and consented to them. I. N. went with us himself to the Surgeon General's office, where he procured peculiar favors for us: that we should be sent to a hospital in the city, where he could see us often; and that orders should be given that nothing should interfere with our comfort, or our enjoyment of our consciences.

Thence we were sent to Medical Purveyor Abbot, who assigned us to the best hospital in the city, the Douglas Hospital.

The next day after our coming here I. N. and James Austin came to add to our number E. W. H. and C. S. L., so now there are five of us instead of three. We are pleasantly situated in a room by ourselves in the upper or fourth story, and are enjoying our advantages of good quarters and tolerable food as no one can except he has been deprived of them.

[10*th* month] 8*th*. — To-day we have a pass to go out to see the city.

9*th*. — We all went, thinking to do the whole city in a day, but before the time of our passes expired, we were glad to drag ourselves back to the rest and quiet of D. H. During the day we called upon our friend I. N. in the Patent Office. When he came to see us on the 7th, he stated he had called upon the President that afternoon to request him to release us and let us go home to our friends. The President promised to consider it over-night. Accordingly yesterday morning, as I. N. told us, he waited upon him again. He found there a woman in the greatest distress. Her son, only a boy of fifteen years and four months, having been enticed into the Army, had deserted and been sentenced to be shot the next day. As the clerks were telling her, the President was in the War Office and could not be seen, nor did they think he could attend to her case that day. I. N. found her almost wild with grief. 'Do not despair, my good woman,' said he, 'I guess the President can be seen after

a bit.' He soon presented her case to the President, who exclaimed at once, 'That must not be, I must look into that case, before they shoot that boy'; and telegraphed at once to have the order suspended.

I. N. judged it was not a fit time to urge our case. We feel we can afford to wait, that a life may be saved. But we long for release. We do not feel easy to remain here.

11*th*. — To-day we attended meeting held in the house of a Friend, Asa Arnold, living near here. There were but four persons beside ourselves. E. W. H. and C. S. A. showed their copy of the charges about to have been preferred against them in court-martial before they left their regiment, to a lawyer who attended the meeting. He laughed at the Specification of Mutiny, declaring such a charge could not have been lawfully sustained against them.

The experiences of our new friends were similar to ours, except they fell among officers who usually showed them favor and rejoiced with them in their release.

13*th*. — L. M. M. had quite an adventure yesterday. He being fireman with another was in the furnace room among three or four others, when the officer of the day, one of the surgeons, passed around on inspection. 'Stand up,' he ordered them, wishing to be saluted. The others arose; but by no means L. The order was repeated for his benefit, but he sat with his cap on, telling the surgeon he had supposed he was excused from such things as he was one of the Friends. Thereat the officer flew at him, exclaiming, he would take the Quaker out of him. He snatched off his cap and seizing him by the collar tried to raise him to his feet; but finding his strength insufficient and that L. was not to be frightened, he changed his purpose in his wrath and calling for the corporal of the guard had him taken to the guard-house. This was about eleven A. M. and he lay there till about six P.M., when the surgeon in charge, arriving home and hearing of it, ordered the officer of the day to go and take him out, telling him never to put another man into the guard-house while he was in charge here without consulting him. The manner of his release was very satisfactory to us, and we waited for this rather than effect it by our own efforts. We are all getting uneasy about remaining here, and if our release do not come soon, we feel we must intercede with the authorities, even if the alternative be imprisonment.

The privations I have endured since leaving home, the great tax upon my nervous strength, and my mind as well, since I have had charge of our extensive correspondence, are beginning to tell upon my health and I long for rest.

20*th*. We begin to feel we shall have to decline service as heretofore, unless our position is changed. I shall not say but we submit too much in not declining at once, but it has seemed most prudent at least to make suit with Government rather than provoke the hostility of their subalterns. We were ordered here with little understanding of the true state of things as they really exist here; and were advised by Friends to come and make no objections, being assured it was but for a very brief time and only a matter of form. It might not have been wrong; but as we find we do too much fill the places of soldiers (L. M. M.'s fellow fireman has just left for the field, and I am to take his place, for instance), and are clearly doing military service, we are continually oppressed by a sense of guilt, that makes our struggles earnest.

21*st*. — I. N. has not called yet; our situation is becoming almost intolerable. I query if patience is justified under the circumstances. My distress of mind may be enhanced by my feeble condition of health, for to-day I am confined to my bed, almost too weak to get downstairs. This is owing to exposure after being heated over the furnaces.

26*th*. — Though a week has gone by, and my cold has left me, I find I am no better, and that I am reduced very low in strength and flesh by the sickness and pain I am experiencing. Yet I still persist in going below once a day. The food I am able to get is not such as is proper.

11*th* mo., 5*th*. — I spend most of my time on my bed, much of it alone. And very precious to me is the nearness I am favored to attain to unto the Master. Notwithstanding my situation and state, I am happy in the enjoyment of His consolations. Lately my confidence has been strong, and I think I begin to feel that our patience is soon to be rewarded with relief; insomuch that a little while ago, when dear P. D. was almost overcome with snow, I felt bold to comfort him with the assurance of my belief, that it would not be long so. My mind is too weak to allow of my reading much; and, though I enjoy the company of my companions a part of the time, especially in the evening, I am much alone; which affords me abundant time for meditation and waiting upon God. The fruits of this are sweet, and a recompense for affliction.

6*th*. — Last evening E. W. H. saw I. N. particularly on my behalf, I suppose. He left at once for the President. This morning he called to inform us of his interview at the White House. The President was moved to sympathy in my behalf, when I. N. gave him a letter from one of our Friends in New York. After its perusal he exclaimed to our friend, 'I want you to go and tell Stanton, that it is my wish all those young men be sent home at once.' He was on his way to the Secretary this morning as he called.

Later. I. N. has just called again informing us in joy that we are free. At the War Office he was urging the Secretary to consent to our paroles, when the President entered. 'It is my urgent wish,' said he. The Secretary yielded; the order was given, and we were released. What we had waited for so many weeks was accomplished in a few moments by a Providential ordering of circumstances.

7*th*. — I. N. came again last evening bringing our paroles. The preliminary arrangements are being made, and we are to start this afternoon for New York.

Note. Rising from my sick-bed to undertake this journey, which lasted through the night, its fatigues overcame me, and upon my arrival in New York I was seized with delirium from which I only recovered after many weeks, through the mercy and favor of Him, who in all this trial had been our guide and strength and comfort.